2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

in the ritual of the chieftaincy more than Newcomers do; provide the chief's councillors; pay rain-levies and in other ways express their closer tie with him. But there is no rigid class structure based on tradition. All villages are liable to break up. If for any reason the village's internal cohesion begins to weaken, its members scatter and it disappears as a political entity. Invader as well as Newcomer villages may thus disintegrate. The smaller sections of an Invader village which now set up villages of their own have to compete with the larger and more united villages of Newcomer origin. Another facet of the political process, therefore, is the continual competition of village headmen who are trying to maintain the unity of the villages under them, and to increase their following, so that their status against the chief and the other village headmen may be enhanced.

Marks of Rank

In the vernacular it is the *name* of the village which is said to be important.[1] This name is usually taken from the founder of the village and is assumed by a new village headman when he succeeds to the position: when a new village is founded the headman gives it his name to distinguish it from the parent village. But the importance that is ascribed to a name is clearly the importance of the corporate group which it represents. The headman is an incumbent of a social status, the prestige of which is drawn from the corporate group which he represents in his public dealings.

The prestige of village headmen is shown particularly in the degree of deference accorded to them by other village headmen. The headman with the highest prestige is of course the chief: the original leader of the Invaders. Below him may be ranked the rest of the village headmen in a relatively fixed pyramidal hierarchy, determined by a number of factors which I shall outline later.

The dress of important headmen is often an indicator of prestige but this criterion is not infallible nowadays when labour migrants, craftsmen and tobacco growers can afford to buy better clothes than many headmen. But it is usually a fairly safe guess that when a man carries a long stick and is dressed in long flowing

[1] *Lina lya kulengwa*—lit. 'the name is great'.